

John Ch 3 v22-36

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again for a wee while to the chapter we read in John 3, and reading, well, we're not going to read, but we're just looking at this section again by way of overview from verse 18 to the end.

Just read at the beginning here, whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

How thankful we are that Nicodemus came to Jesus one night under the cover of darkness, because the conversation that Jesus had, which we looked at already here, the conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus is possibly the most amazing conversation that we find in the Bible, because in that conversation, Jesus explains to us the absolute importance of salvation, and also explains to us the hows and the whys, as it were, of salvation.

It tells us about God's great love to us, and of his great love to the Father and to ourselves. And it's really, it's a section of God's Word we never tire of reading, never tire of listening to, and there's always something new in it.

Indeed, that's one of the things we should always be asking the Lord, to give us something new from his Word. Old things made new. Old things made new. You know, that's one of the beautiful things about the Bible, and about God's Word is that every day it's fresh, it's new.

[1 : 48] Even although you might come to a section of God's Word that you're able to recite, you're able to maybe recite several verses, you know them by heart.

But that doesn't change the fact that today, when you come to it, it's new, it's another day. Your situation today is different. It's always different.

We're always at a different stage, different point in our life. And God's Word is always relevant to wherever we are. Some days it's more relevant than at others, but it's always relevant.

And we should be always going to the Lord and saying, Lord, teach me. Help me, help me to understand. Open my mind to see something new. That's what the psalmist was saying.

Open mine eyes that I might behold wonderful things out of your law. That's what we do. You know, when we come to God's Word like that, we're coming like we talk about the gospel table.

[2 : 51] And it's just like when we come to eat, we come up to the table, and we come to eat of what's set before us. And that's what we should be doing spiritually when we come to the Word. We ought to be coming saying, Lord, feed me, nourish me.

Open my heart. Open my eyes to see and to understand. Now, as we know, this man, Nicodemus, who came to Jesus, he came, as we said, under the cover of darkness.

And remember, we highlighted this. He said to him, we know that you are a teacher come from God. So Nicodemus, remember, didn't come, as it were, on his own.

He came, I believe, as a representative of other of the Pharisees. Because John later on tells us that many of the Pharisees weren't against Jesus.

The majority were. But many of them weren't. Many of them were believing in him. They had come to understand and appreciate, yeah, we believe that this is the Messiah, that this is the Son of God.

[3 : 53] But you know, there's a very sad verse in John's gospel where he talks about this, and it says, among the chief rulers, also many believed on him. But because of the Pharisees, they didn't confess him in case they were put out of the synagogue, for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

And that's a very challenging verse in the Bible, because it shows us that there are people who believe in Jesus, and yet they're trying to keep it hidden because of the way they fear that if they confess Jesus, it would impact their life negatively with regard to their social standing, or with regard to their work, or with regard to the community.

They feel that they might lose out some way in this world if they confessed Jesus. I hope that there's nobody like that here today.

That you are somebody who has come to believe in Jesus. You believe he is Savior, and yet you're trying to keep it quiet. You're trying to conceal it because you're afraid of how it might impact your life.

You appreciate, or you put more emphasis on the fear of people rather than of God. Well, anyway, Jesus in this discussion with Nicodemus, he goes on to highlight his own role, his own work, and then we have that great, great verse that we were looking at last week, where God so loved the world, because he gave his only Son.

[5 : 34] And then it goes on in this gospel to tell us that whoever does not believe is condemned already. In order to find this salvation, we're requested, we're called upon to believe.

That's what it says. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal or everlasting life. But then it says here, whoever does not believe is condemned already.

Now, that's a very solemn thought, that if you or I do not believe in the Lord, we're condemned already. Now, if you're here today and you do not believe in the Lord, you might not feel it, you might be saying to yourself, I don't understand that.

How do you mean I'm condemned? Well, the older people here will remember when the death penalty was still in this country. It was for treason and for capital punishment was there for murder.

And it's not that terribly long ago that people were condemned, people who were found guilty of murder, that the sentence of death was passed upon them.

[6 : 54] The judge pronounced that that person would be taken away and on such and such a date would be hanged. It was a very, very solemn, solemn time, solemn moment.

Now, the person who was condemned to death, still happens in America, people on death row, person is taken to their cell. They're not taken out immediately and executed.

But there was a day appointed. And on such and such a day, they would be taken and they would be hanged. But that person, in a sense, was as good as dead.

The sentence of condemnation was upon them. And even as they walked away from the courtroom back to their cell, in a sense, everything was as it always was.

Everything around them was as it was. They felt, well, they probably didn't feel as it did, but in a sense, they were feeling as it was because everything was just the same. With this one exception, that they were now condemned to death.

[8 : 01] And, you know, that's what the Bible is telling us, how we are in and of ourselves. That God's condemnation is upon us. It's serious.

And that's why Jesus came into this world. To lose us from this condemnation. To deliver us from this condemnation. And the only way, of course, that he could do that was by going in our place.

God is just. God can't just turn away from sin and excuse it and say, Oh, well, look, now I've got a new policy. I have stopped looking upon sin the way I used to.

He can't. He cannot be inconsistent to who he is. And the justice and the holiness and the purity of God and his righteousness requires that sin has to be punished.

There is condemnation upon us as sinners. But Jesus says, well, I'll come. I'll stand in their place. I'll take their punishment. I will go and take it all upon myself.

[9 : 05] That's what Jesus has done. That is why. That, my friends, is why we must believe in him. You see, we're born condemned.

It's not that when we reach a certain age, all of a sudden, we become sinners. We're born. We inherited. As the Shorter Catechism talks about it, it says, our first parents.

It talks about Adam and Eve as our first parents. And when they fell, we fell with them. We inherited what they became. You know how, in this world, how we inherit mannerisms and characteristics and all these things from our parents.

You will often hear it said about someone. Oh, it's in their people. A particular, maybe somebody who's very witty. Or somebody who's very kind.

Or somebody who's particularly skilled at a certain thing. And they say, oh, but it's in the people. That's, the people were known. Their people were known for these.

[10 : 16] These were traits or characteristics or mannerisms or things. That were just passed down. It's in their people.

And that's how it is for us. Sin was in our people. It was passed. There was nothing. We couldn't prevent it. In the same way, we cannot change the color of our eyes.

We cannot change these manners. We cannot change the characteristics that we inherit. And we cannot change ourselves. The sin that's within us. And that is why Jesus came into this world.

As we said, to do just this very thing. To do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. But the problem is that there are people who ignore it. Whoever believes in him is not condemned.

But whoever does not believe is condemned already. Because he has not believed in the only Son of God. And this is a judgment.

[11 : 16] The light has come into the world. And people love darkness rather than light. You see, there's a choice. There are two courses of action. There is light and there is darkness.

Naturally, we're in the darkness. That's how it is. But Jesus has come, who is a light, to show us that we're in darkness.

Now, some people may say, and you know, there are many people who are really opposed to the gospel. And you know one of the reasons why people hate the gospel of Jesus Christ. And when we talk about the gospel, it's not just the fact that Jesus has come to save us.

But the fact that we are sinners. Because that's kind of one of the things that the Bible teaches us about ourselves that people hate to hear.

Because we love to think we're good. We like to think that we're decent. And hopefully, with regard to the ordinary way of life, I believe everybody in here is.

[12 : 25] But what we're getting at is how we are before God. And it's out of God's love and mercy to us that he's telling us how it is.

And he's saying, irrespective of how you feel, I want you to know that you are not right with me. You need to come to a proper and correct relationship with me.

Otherwise, you'll die. You'll die in your sin. Now, some people say, I don't want to hear that. And that's what Jesus is saying. People are like that because they prefer the darkness to the light.

Now, we do know there are some people in our own country who do not know the gospel of Jesus Christ. They don't know it. They don't understand it. But there are many people who do, who've heard it, who've grown up with it, and they push it away.

They don't want to know it. It makes them feel uncomfortable. They would rather that somehow that this wasn't true. And they just say, leave me alone. I want to get on with my life the way I want to live it.

[13 : 30] I don't want to be told about this. I don't want to be reminded about this. I don't want to be challenged in this way. I don't want to know about these things. But you know, it's our mercy to be told them.

And that's what God has done. In his mercy, he has come and he has revealed these things to us. If you go into a house you've never been in before and it's pitch dark, first thing you do is you put on the light.

And before you put on that light, you have no idea what faces you. You're going to a place you've never been in before. And that's what light does.

Light reveals to us what's in there. And that's what God is doing. And those of you who have come to faith in Jesus Christ, that's one of the things that God did to you, is revealed yourself to yourself.

And he continues to do that. And sometimes you get a shock. And you say, I didn't realize. I didn't see that. I never saw this about myself before.

[14 : 38] Sometimes it can become really uncomfortable. The probing light of God's Spirit shining into your heart, revealing to yourself what is there.

But God doesn't do that in order just to condemn us. Because we're already condemned. Jesus didn't come into this world as a condemner. He came into this world as a Savior.

And that's what he's wanting you to see today. If you've never seen it before, is that you are a sinner who needs saving. And Jesus says, I'm there for you.

Because I am a Savior. One day Jesus will come into this world as a judge. But that's not how he came in 2,000 years ago. He came in as a Savior. And it is still as a Savior he comes.

And today he is offering himself to you today. Still as a Savior. He is able to save you from your sins. To save us all.

[15 : 40] That's what we need. And so we find here that these are great verses explaining to us where we are.

But then we find, we come then to an incident from verse 22 onwards that is really very interesting and very helpful to us.

And we find this, now that we could go through it in detail, but just really by summing it up, we find that Jesus and his disciples move into the Judean countryside and they stayed there for some time baptizing.

And then this incident occurs, which I believe is of great help to us. And we see here that John's disciples are complaining to John that everybody is going to Jesus.

And I think it's at this moment, I think we've highlighted a little of this because we saw a little of it before, is it's here that we see how John truly was such a great man.

[16 : 47] Jesus said that. Jesus spoke of John as being as great as anybody. And part of John's greatness was his humility. Because at no point do we ever find jealousy or envy in the heart of John when people have started leaving him and beginning to follow Jesus Christ.

Because, of course, John knew that his whole mission was to prepare the way for Jesus. John had huge crowds following him. He was the man.

In fact, people were wondering, was he the Christ? And, of course, the ordinary people had heard John so gladly. Of course, the religious rulers began to resent him and they were very, very opposed to him.

The ordinary people thought John was wonderful and great crowds followed him. But John was saying, no, it's not about me. Look, I'm pointing to it. There's somebody coming after me. He is the one.

And, of course, now that Jesus has come, the crowds have started following Jesus. And John's disciples, they feel really upset about this.

[17 : 57] And that's why they go to John and they say, look, they're all going after Jesus. John, that's the beauty. The loveliness of John is that he doesn't bear any grudges or resentment.

Humanly speaking, it's all too possible. And, you know, it's one of the things that's caused so many problems in the history of the church all over. It's people's noses being put out. Our noses are put out so easily.

We've always got to develop and seek for the gracious, humble spirit. John showed that. But John highlights many really wonderful things here.

And John illustrates the situation that he's in, really, like the bride and the bridegroom and the groom. The groom, sorry. The groom and the best man.

John likens himself to the best man at a wedding. He likens Jesus to the bridegroom. And he's saying to him, look, wouldn't it be crazy if the best man took over at a wedding?

[19 : 03] Can you imagine what it would be like if at a wedding and you have the bride and the groom standing there and the best man comes in and nudges the groom out of the way and he stands beside the bride.

Runs up beside the bride to cut the cake. Goes into all the foot and stands beside the bride. You'd be saying, it's not about you. You're only there as the best man.

You're not the groom. And that's what John is saying. That's his role.

Jesus is the bridegroom. He's just the best man. He's there, as it were, to help, to point things, to be of assistance.

And then he goes on to say in a wonderful way that Jesus must increase.

[19 : 58] He must increase, but I must decrease. And my friends, that is the way of gospel growth. Jesus will not increase in you if you are increasing in your own self-importance and your own ego.

Your own ego and your own self-importance cannot grow simultaneously at the same level with Jesus in your heart.

As Jesus grows and increases in you, you yourself grow down. That's the way. That's the growth of the kingdom. And that's what sometimes makes it so difficult.

Because we want to be number one. We want our way. We want, it's about me. And the Lord says, no, it's about me. And that sometimes is hard for us to take on board.

It's about him, his way, his purpose, his name, his glory. It's all about him. We've got to learn that. And John the Baptist learned that.

- [21 : 13] And so he says about Jesus, he must increase, but I must decrease. Again, we have to ask ourselves, how did Jesus increase? Well, in a sense, as God, he cannot increase because he is absolutely complete and perfect in his own being and in his own glory.
- But humanly speaking, Jesus increased. Remember, it tells us that very thing, that even with regard to his natural growth, he increased from a baby to a child to into his teens, into adulthood.
- It tells us Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. We're told that. He increased in people's awareness of him.
- When he began his public ministry, it was only the people away up in the north that knew about him. By the time he was put to death, the whole nation knew about him. So he increased in people's awareness of him.
- Again, he increased with regard to the teaching and the authority and the influence that he had. Remember, as Jesus went round or everywhere, people were amazed with the way that he taught.
- [22 : 29] Again, Jesus increased with regard to his suffering and disobedience. Though he were a son, yet, this is an amazing thing, yet learned he obedience through the things that he suffered.
- It's not that Christ was ever disobedient. It's not that Christ ever struggled with obedience, but he learned the nature of obedience through suffering.
- And, you know, it is something that God does with us because he teaches us obedience through suffering as well. Suffering is difficult, isn't it?
- But the Lord knows what is good for us because by nature we're disobedient. We're disobedient children. You know, some children are incredibly disobedient and others aren't.
- And those who are really disobedient need more teaching than others. And very often the way of teaching is through discipline. We don't like discipline.
- [23 : 34] We don't like it. We didn't like it as children, and we don't like it as God's children. But God knows what's best for us. And he has an end in view. And he wants, if we could see the glory that he is preparing for us, we would say, Lord, on you go.
- But we're not able to see it in the right way. And sometimes we rebel against his heavy hand upon us. And we fight against it. And there's all sort of things go on in us.
- But you see, as God is working in us in this way, this is all part of the decreasing. And again, Christ must increase with the advancement of his kingdom.
- That's what we're doing today. That's what preaching is involved in, is in seeking to proclaim the kingdom of God so that the kingdom of God will grow.
- Grow in you. Grow in me. That's part of the Lord's prayer. Thy kingdom come. You know when we pray that, Lord, may your kingdom come, we're asking that his kingdom will come into our heart.
- [24 : 42] In other words, that we will know more of him. That Jesus will grow in our heart. That we will become more and more like him. This is all part of Jesus' increasing.
- And then we see then from verse 31, it says then, and whether this is John still talking or whether it's now John the Apostle or John the Baptist, there's division as to that.
- It's very likely it's John the Baptist still because he says, He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way.
- In a sense, whether it's John the Apostle speaking about John the Baptist or John the Baptist himself speaking, the principle is still the same. Because we see here that Christ's ministry is contrasted with John's ministry.

Christ's ministry is greater because he is from above. He is from the very heart of God. Now, of course, John's ministry was from above because everything that John got, he got from above.

[25 : 55] But Jesus himself came from above. And Christ's ministry is greater because of the Word. John's ministry was a Word that was given from heaven.

But Jesus was and is the Word himself. He is the living and true Word. And Christ's ministry is greater because we see that all resources, the Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.

And then in verse 36, it sums everything up. Whoever believes has eternal life. Isn't that beautiful? Eternal life is not something that you as a believer will receive later on.

It's not something that happens to you when you die. It's not that at the moment of death, all of a sudden, eternal life comes into you. Eternal life begins when you're saved.

Eternal life comes into you. Eternal life goes on and grows on, grows up all the time. It's a never-ending source that comes from God.

[27 : 11] It is given to us through what Christ has done. It is ministered to us by the Spirit. It is life that shall never end.

Right now, we cannot see the full end of what it will be. But my friend, it's there. And you know part of how you know it's there.

There are various things that will tell you that eternal life is there. For instance, the source of life has come from above.

And when you have that life within you, there is a knowledge that your real home is above. It's not that you're not scared of death.

But there is a hope beating in your heart. Not a false hope. Not a hope that it's kind of like a hope everything will be well at the end. It's a Christian hope which is a persuasion.

[28 : 16] And say, hey, I know, I actually know where I'm going. Oh, I don't know what's going to happen when I die. I can't tell you all these things. I don't know how I'm going to die. And I don't exactly know what will happen.

But I do know, I know where I'm going to land. I'm going to be taken into the presence of the Lord. And you know something? There's a desire there in my heart for that.

That's because of eternal life. It's a life that's already flowing in you. If you don't have that desire at all, if there is nothing in you, if your heart is dead to these things, then I would say, hey, that's a cause for concern.

If you are immune to the sort of these things, and it doesn't mean anything to you, I would say it's time to sit up and take a real look at your life.

Because that might be meaning to you, you're actually under condemnation. You ask Jesus to come into your heart and say, Lord, I don't want to live under condemnation.

[29 : 21] I don't want... See what it says at the end here? Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. You have it? Say it. Forever. Whoever. Whoever does not obey the Son, or who does not have the Son, shall not see life.

But the wrath of God remains on him. That's awful. That's this condemnation. God's wrath. Oh, it hasn't been revealed in its fullness.

But it's already... It's already there. There's only one way to be delivered from that wrath. That's what Jesus did.

On the cross, he took God's wrath on himself. You don't need to experience this wrath. Ask Jesus into your heart and into your life.

And say to him, Lord Jesus, I want your life. I want that eternal life. I want your light to shine into my heart.

[30 : 25] Make me your own. Let us pray. Oh, gracious God, we ask that this light and this life that we've spoken of here may be the portion of every single one here today.

We pray, oh Lord, that if there is darkness residing in any heart, shine your light in even now.

Light and darkness cannot dwell together. So we pray that the darkness will be dispelled and that the light of Jesus will shine in victorious power into every heart.

Be with us as we make our way home. Take us home safely. Bless us throughout this day. Prepare us for the evening service and grant us grace in everything.

Take away our sin in Jesus' name. Amen.